

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT VIRUS VARIANTS



Viruses constantly change through mutation and become more diverse. These mutations are called variants. Multiple variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 have been documented in the United States and globally during this pandemic. Currently, there are four notable variants in the United States and Delaware, which we are monitoring:

B.1.1.7 (Alpha): This variant, initially found in the United Kingdom, was first detected in the United States in December 2020.

B.1.351 (Beta): This variant, initially found in South Africa in December 2020, was first detected in the United States at the end of January 2021.

P.1 (Gamma): This variant was first detected in the United States in January 2021. It was initially identified in travelers from Brazil, who were tested during routine screening at an airport in Japan.

B.1.617.2 (Delta): This variant was first detected in the United States in March 2021. It was initially identified in India in December 2020.

- **What is Different About the Delta Variant?**

- » It is much more contagious than other variants, spreading more than twice as easily from person to person.
- » Vaccinated people can get the Delta variant in a breakthrough infection and may be contagious, though they represent a very small amount of transmission.
- » Importantly, getting vaccinated can help prevent the Delta variant from spreading even further. Spread occurs mostly among the unvaccinated. Data show that the vaccines are preventing severe illness, hospitalization, and death, and are effective against the Delta variant.

Why Virus Variants Are a Concern

- They can spread disease more easily and quickly.
- They can increase the overall spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, leading to more cases, which would increase the number of people who need clinical care.

The Vaccine and Virus Variants

So far, it has been determined that the antibodies you develop from getting the vaccines currently available will work to protect you against the new variants. This is being closely studied. The most effective way to prevent the spread of this virus, no matter the strain, is to continue to follow the guidance previously stressed by public health experts.

If You're Not Vaccinated, Continue to Protect Yourself and Others



Practice Social distancing



Wear a face covering.



Wash your hands.



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